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FM AMEMBASSY ASHGABAT

TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 2849

INFO RUCNCLS/ALL SOUTH AND CENTRAL ASIA COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNCIS/CIS COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUCNMEM/EU MEMBER STATES COLLECTIVE PRIORITY

RUEHAK/AMEMBASSY ANKARA PRIORITY 5212

RUEHBJ/AMEMBASSY BEIJING PRIORITY 2952

RUEHKO/AMEMBASSY TOKYO PRIORITY 2817

RUEHIT/AMCONSUL ISTANBUL PRIORITY 3456

RUEHVEN/USMISSION USOSCE PRIORITY 3565

RHMFIS/CDR USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL PRIORITY

RUEHUNV/USMISSION UNVIE VIENNA PRIORITY 0062

RUEHBS/USEU BRUSSELS PRIORITY

RUEHGV/USMISSION GENEVA PRIORITY 1446

RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC PRIORITY

RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/JOINT STAFF WASHDC PRIORITY

RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC PRIORITY

C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 ASHGABAT 000644

SIPDIS

SCA/CEN; DRL

E.O. 12958: DECL: 05/22/2019

TAGS: [PHUM](#) [PGOV](#) [TX](#)

SUBJECT: TURKMENISTAN: BERDIYEV RELEASED FROM DETENTION,  
BUT PROVIDES FEW DETAILS

REF: A. 08 ASHGABAT 01472

[1](#)B. ASHGABAT 00598

Classified By: Charge Richard Miles, reasons 1.4 (b) and (d).

[1](#)1. (C) SUMMARY: Post learned on May 13 that Bazargeldy Berdiyev had been released from Ministry of National Security (MNB) detention on that day. Berdiyev has been seeking compensation from the government for violations of his and his wife's rights during the 1990s (Ref A). Political Officer met on May 14 with Berdiyev and his wife, but was unable to learn much about his treatment while in detention. The Berdিয়েvs claim that a letter, taken from Berdiyev during his detention, was a statement from the Government of Turkmenistan acknowledging that it owed the family significant financial compensation for property loss and for the injuries the Berdিয়েvs suffered in the 1990s. Given inconsistencies in the information previously provided by the Berdিয়েvs, and their apparent obsession with obtaining the money they claim they are supposed to receive, it is not clear that the Berdিয়েvs are providing Post with complete and fully accurate information about their case. END SUMMARY.

BERDIYEV RELEASED FROM DETENTION

[1](#)2. (C) Political Officer met with Bazargeldy Berdiyev and his wife Ayjemal on May 14 to try to confirm the details of his four day detention (Ref B) and release. Although a meeting had been requested with Mr. Berdiyev, upon arrival, he brought Political Officer into Mrs. Berdiyeva's bedroom -- her physical disabilities keep her in bed the majority of the time -- and he took a seat behind Political Officer. Mr. Berdiyev spoke slowly and slurred his words at times, as if he did not want to move his jaw, and walked with a slight limp. He also became confused frequently when showing Political Officer a variety of documents. (NOTE: When Political Officer met with Mr. Berdiyev last year, she recalled he spoke in a somewhat slurred fashion, but she did not recall him limping or demonstrating overt physical impairment. END NOTE.)

[1](#)3. (C) Mrs. Berdiyeva provided a few additional details

about her husband's detention and about the status of the family's efforts to acquire financial compensation from the Turkmen Government. Mr. Berdiyev, however, was withdrawn and when directly asked to provide any details regarding what had happened to him, he would only say that on the morning of May 9, he left the family home to get medicine for his wife and to make copies of a letter the family received in March from the Prosecutor General's Office. As he left a neighborhood pharmacy, he was thrown into a car by several men. He said the March letter was taken from him during his detention. He appeared to be uncomfortable and distressed speaking about his detention and was largely silent for the duration of the meeting.

¶4. (C) Mrs. Berdiyeva explained that the family received the letter, signed by First Deputy Prosecutor General Amanmurad Halliyev, on March 16. The letter, she claimed, contained language in which Halliyev acknowledged that the Government of Turkmenistan, in accordance with the request of the UN Human Rights Council, would pay the family \$2.787 million in compensation for the family's loss of property and for moral damages suffered in the 1990s. She said the letter indicated that the money would be made available at a Turkmen Government bank, but it did not specify the bank or provide further account information or other details.

¶5. (C) She also changed some details of her overall story during the meeting. In December 2008, she had told Embassy staff that the family had received a letter from a UN office in Geneva that asked the Government of Turkmenistan to

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compensate the family. However, the family failed to accommodate Post's repeated requests to see a copy of the letter, offering various excuses for why the letter was not available. During the May 14 meeting with Political Officer, Berdiyeva admitted that the family had not received this letter. In fact, Berdiyeva revealed that she was a former employee at the Ministry of Health when Berdimuhammedov was Health Minister, and suggested that she had personal contacts who now worked in the Presidential Administration. She said that in December 2008, a former colleague contacted her and reported having seen a letter that a UN agency sent to President Berdimuhammedov. The letter reportedly contained recommendations for the resolution of multiple specific human rights cases, including Berdiyeva's.

#### ATMOSPHERICS ON THE FAMILY

¶6. (C) The Berdিয়েvs live on the bottom floor of one of the Soviet-era high rise apartment buildings. They have enclosed a porch area and parking area with iron security bar fencing.

A recent year Mercedes sedan was parked within. Mr. Berdiyev volunteered that he is "a trader" who used to own a store of his own. Now the store is gone, but he still conducts business out of his basement. The apartment was large, with at least six or eight rooms, although sparsely furnished, in the Turkmen tradition. Expensive Turkmen carpets covered the floors of every room.

¶7. (C) COMMENT: Political Officer was able to confirm that Berdiyev was detained and had been released. There were no obvious signs that he had been mistreated. While Post finds his claim of detention plausible, we are concerned that elements of the Berdিয়েvs' overall stories do not match up and contain major gaps. It has become more obvious to us that there are details -- and potentially personal connections -- that they do not want the U.S. Embassy to know about, and some details that they have fabricated in the past. The other disconcerting element of this story is that the Berdিয়েvs are singularly and almost obsessively focused on getting hold of the significant financial compensation they believe they have a chance of obtaining. They have shown no interest at all in any guidance or offers to apply for assistance to get them to an international treatment center specializing in victims of torture. However, it may

be that they view the compensation in part as their own  
earned wealth, and want to make their own personal choices  
for treatment, no matter the cost. END COMMENT.

MILES